# A COLLABORATIVE PLACE: THE ROOTS OF COLLABORATION IN INDIANA PUBLIC AND SCHOOL LIBRARIES

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*Let us suppose that the momentous problem is solved of persuading children to use the library for a more serious purpose than to find a book 'as good as… ' and that we are trying to convince children that the library… can furnish information on whatever they wish to know about – whether it is some boy who comes on the busiest morning of the week, to find out how to make a puppet show in time to give an afternoon exhibition, or some high-school girl who rushes over in the 20 minutes' recess to write an exhaustive treatise on women's colleges. –Miss A.L. Sargent, 1895.*

The "momentous problem" of providing interesting, challenging and fun resources for children and young adults rings as true 108 years later as it did for Miss Sargent. As true is the continual challenge for the librarian serving last minute student crises. In thinking about youth services, I was led to wonder about the two library institutions that serve young people: the school library and the public library. In my MLS courses I have read a great deal on the benefits of strong collaborative efforts between these two entities. Missing from these readings was a sense of a historical relationship between the school and public library. This article examines the early, inter-twinned relationship between school and public libraries in Indiana. The collaboration between the two entities once helped lead Indiana to top education status in the United States. The purpose of this paper is to lay out the historical development of public and school libraries in the state in the hopes of creating a better appreciation for the long and diverse history of the collaboration between the libraries. By knowing where we come from perhaps we can better understand where we are going.

## TIMELINE OF LIBRARY DEVELOPMENT IN INDIANA

Even before statehood, the citizens of the Indiana region believed in the value of education. The Northwest Ordinance of 1787 established a system of government for the territory including present day Indiana (State Library). The Ordinance of 1787 provided that "school and the means of education shall forever be encouraged" (Cotton 428). The Ordinance of 1785 instructed each township in the territory to set aside land for a free public school (Bulletin 1914 14). Two elements of pioneer independence stood in the way of the ordinances' success, however. One was the simple fact that not enough money was generated by the sale of lots to fund the building of a public school. Two, the settlers of the area felt compulsory education was not in the vein of free and independent government. The perennial challenges of finances and government boundaries slowed the process of free public schooling. May of 1800 saw the formal creation of the Indiana Territory (State Library).

Library development ran parallel to the schools for the early years of the 19th century. The Constitutional Convention of 1816 provided for funding of at least 10% of the proceeds of lot sales (in county seats) to be held for the establishment of a public library (Cotton 429). At the same time, a library company was required to maintain the finances and development of the library. Monroe County and Public School Library of Bloomington, Indiana, was created in this manner. The proceeds collected by June 1818 totaled a little over $1900 for the library (Henry 20). By 1821, the physical collection was begun by spending $60 on the purchase of books (20). By 1820, Monroe County had a library building just east of the courthouse. The collection was combined with the school district in 1894 and the joint collection was housed in the Central School Building under the supervision of the city Board of Education (20). Miss Zora Miller, librarian in 1904, was praised for "her intelligence and practical knowledge of the tastes of children in reading" (21).

The State Library was formed in 1825 and by 1850, the national census counted 151 libraries in Indiana with roughly 68,403 volumes held (Cotton 430). According to Education in Indiana (1793-1934), the breakdown of these libraries is as follows:

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| Public Libraries: | 58 |
| School Libraries: | 3 |
| Sunday School Libraries: | 85 |
| College Libraries: | 4 |
| Church Libraries: | 1 |

Indiana gained statehood in late 1816. Considering the population was approximately 988,416 persons and Indiana was just emerging from the pioneer era, 151 libraries was an impressive beginning (430). In 1895, General Assembly modifies the structure of the State Library, bringing it under control of the State Board of Education (Henry 68). This administrative structure ensures collaboration between schools and libraries as both answer to the same leadership.

In 1851, the Constitutional Convention called for a common school system. The 1852 General Assembly provisioned money for a free public library in every township of the state (Cotton 431). There are troubles in the maintenance of this infrastructure though: library collections did not have permanent housing, the township trustees were often in charge of collections with little or no training, and there was no money for the maintenance of the collections (431). Upon the breakout of the Civil War, all discussions for or against free public libraries or schools were halted. The state had bigger tax burdens requiring concentration.

During the war, women's literary clubs had sprung up all over the state.[1] These clubs realized public and school libraries were terribly important to the development of a literate and educated citizenry (Henry 73). After the war, in 1899, the Public Library Commission[2] is created with the charge of supervising library work for the state (73). About this same time, Andrew Carnegie was beginning his building frenzy in the midwest. The Public Library Commission and the women's literary clubs set out to build public sentiment for the library.

Young people had also been working in literary clubs. 1883 saw the rise of The Young People's Reading Circle (Cotton 436). This group was a collection of various local reading circles that developed around the perceived need for reading guidance among young people. Reading one book a year was enough to gain a young person admission to the reading circle membership. In 1887, the State Teacher's Association brought the reading circle under their domain to encourage "good" literature (436). The State Teacher's Association believed that reading was not a task to be mastered, but a life skill to be nurtured. Reading for enjoyment was at the time gaining national momentum. As George Watson Cole, Librarian for Jersey City Free Public Library wrote in The Library Journal, April 1895, "As librarians, we believe it to be the first duty of the teacher to encourage the young to acquire the reading habit…It is the overmastering desire on the part of the young, fed by a lively curiosity and interest, to gain information, which finds expression in reading voraciously everything that tends to satisfy this craving" (115). However, both Mr. Cole and the Indiana State Teacher's Association would agree that the young person needed strong guidance as to what was appropriate literature.

The philosophy behind reading circles focused on providing good reading material to young people. Often circle meetings and collections were held in the school buildings. The philosophy assumed the youth would take the book home and share it with his or her family. Here are the beginnings of family literacy programming. By 1904, the average county holdings in Indiana for the Young People's Reading Circle numbered 5071 books (Cotton 438). These books might be housed in various locations: schools, public libraries or churches.

In late 1840, approximately 1 in 7 Indiana residents were illiterate (Bulletin 1914 15). By 1849, the citizens of the now State of Indiana passed tax laws governing the subsidy of free public schools. By 1914, illiteracy rates of residents 10-20 was estimated at .6% of the population and Indiana was ranked 1st in the nation for her schools (15). School and public libraries were greatly responsible for this literacy increase. For these reasons, The Library Journal of June, 1917, could accurately proclaim, "In library work with schools, now an important part of library activities in many states, the Indiana Commission was a pioneer." (452).

## INDIANA AS "PIONEER" FOR LIBRARY SERVICES

Indiana was truly a pioneer in regards to incorporating, systematizing and collaborating public and school libraries. In 1927, as part of Columbia University's Teachers College Series, Frank Hermann Koos collected an exhaustive amount of comparative data entitled State Participation in Public School Library Service. This book compares all states then in the Union and their participation in school library service. Digging through lists of information, several elements of the exemplary Indiana system stand out:

- The Indiana State Board of Education elected one member to be in charge of library and historical departments (by this time the State Board of Education controlled the State Library) (19)
- By 1927, every employee in the public schools was issued a license, including librarians who had to participate in specific education to become a school librarian (21-22).[3] In 1927, Indiana was one of nine states to make elementary school libraries a criterion

for state standardization (similar to accreditation) (96).

- By 1927, for an Indiana high school to be standardized it must be inspected for collection content and completeness. Indiana was one of three states that required specified library standards for accreditation. Indiana was one of four states to require standards be met in order to receive state funding (77).
- By 1927, Indiana was one of seven states to provide summer teacher training in library science (78).[4] The National Education Association and American Library Association met in one convention in 1925 setting educational requirements for school librarians (111). Indiana adapted these recommendations accordingly:

A full-time librarian with an amount of training including one year of professional training in an accredited school for librarians equal to that required for teachers in the high school is the ideal. In the larger high schools, this ideal should be realized, but in the smaller schools teacher-librarians will be necessary. To qualify for this work, she should have at least a six weeks' course of training in a summer library school of its equivalent (112).

In February, 1906, Arthur Cunningham[5] wrote a bit about the courses offered at the Indiana State Normal School Department of Public School Library Science. Course I was entitled "Use of the Library in Public School Work" followed by Course II and III entitled "Organization and Management of School Libraries" (Cunningham, 2). The Department of School Library Science at the Indiana State Normal School was established in 1905 (Indiana School, cover page).[6]

## SUGGESTIONS FOR COLLABORATION BETWEEN SCHOOL AND PUBLIC LIBRARIES

The literature of the late 1800s – early 1900s is full of suggestions for successful collaboration between public and school libraries. Some of these suggestions seem to come right out of a Doug Johnson or David Loertscher school media book. Looking to the past illustrates that school children, administrators and librarians are human and human nature has not changed much in 100 years.

As early as 1879, presenters at the ALA annual conference encouraged schools and public libraries to collaborate. Samual Swett Green of Worcester recommended teachers check out collections for the school term to be housed in their classrooms for student use, classes visit the public library at least once a year and small, specialized reference collections be collected considering age appropriate information needs (Fargo, 15-16). Arthur Cunningham argues in the Indiana State Library Monthly Bulletin (1906) that text-books are not enough to inform young people of all there is to know about a subject that sparks their curiosity. Libraries are needed in school to satisfy this youthful curiosity (Cunningham, 1-2). Cunningham also vehemently argues for all teachers to be exposed to library science as part of their required coursework (3).[7]

In 1904, the Public Library Commission outlined their plans to work with schools in Public Libraries. Seven goals were discussed:

1. Create healthy public sentiment favoring library work in schools.
2. Creation of library institutes to discuss library interests in individual communities bringing together citizens, teachers, librarians and superintendents under one roof for discussion.
3. Publish book lists of suggested reading materials monthly to the community.[8]
4. Incorporate library education into the normal schools.
5. Librarians and teachers should confer as to the best reference and children's books for various age levels.
6. For library instruction for school librarians.
7. Encouragement of "child study and psychology" by parents, teachers and librarians as a selection tool for school collections (500-501).

The announcement ends, "The Library commission has therefore decided to centralize and foster the library work with schools in Indiana and has outlined the above plans in which it asks for your cooperation" (501).

Clearly the historical dedication of librarians and teachers in Indiana is to be commended. Faced with governmental intervention, low tax bases, war and educational standards, the public and school library systems of Indiana did manage to get off the ground and to thrive together. As the dawning of the 21st century faces similar challenges, Miss Sargent's "momentous problem" of encouraging young people to thoroughly utilize the library and for teachers, parents and administrators to support the library continues. Having met many public and school librarians, I believe we are up to the challenge. Just remember history shows that working together makes for success.

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## FOOTNOTES

1 Most notably in New Harmony, see the Lowe and Stone article of this edition for more information on McClure's Workingman's Institute.

2 Often referred to as the Library Commission in literature of the time.

3 Indiana actually began inspecting teachers as early as 1837 when examiners were appointed by the Circuit Courts to check teacher qualifications in then non-standardized rural schools (Kennedy, 75). Millard Fillmore Kennedy tells the story of one examiner who was hounded by a teacher for a certificate of fitness to teach. To escape the extremely ineffective teacher the examiner wrote, "This is to certify that Mr. Amaziah Smith is qualified to teach a common school in Washington Township, and a damned common one at that." (76). Truer licenses began in 1850 (75).

4 In December 29-31, 1896, Indiana hosted the first Library Institute in the U.S. under the guidance of the Indiana Library Association (Finding List, viii).

5 For more information on Arthur Cunningham, see the article by Mehrens and Muyumba in this edition.

6 For more information on materials covered in the courses, The Indiana Department of Public Instruction Rural Teacher Training and Instruction in the Use and Appreciation of Books and Libraries are of interest.

7 "Science" is the term he uses in 1906

8 Of potential interest to those readers who are currently School Media Specialist in Indiana, the bird reports are mentioned here.